

Message Text

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TO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 247353

EXDIS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING REPEAT CANBERRA 6864 SENT ACTION SECSTATE
INFO JAKARTA SAIGON TOKYO WELLINGTON PHNOM PENH
VIENTIANE, DECEMBER 19TH:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6864

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS INFO CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AS, US

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM

1. SUMMARY: MY LONG CONVERSATION DECEMBER 19 ALONE WITH PRIMIN WHITLAM WAS CONDUCTED IN FRIENDLY, TEMPERATE ATMOSPHERE WITH WHITLAM ON THE DEFENSIVE. WE PROBED RECENT PROBLEMS IN US-AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY RELATIONSHIPS, LARGELY CAUSED BY ILL-CONSIDERED PUBLIC REMARKS BY WHITLAM AND TRADE MINISTER CAIRNS. WE AGREED ON IMPORTANCE OF TALKING OUT OUR DIFFERENCES QUIETLY AND PRIVATELY. WHETHER THE IRREPRESSIBLE WHITLAM WILL OBSERVE THIS PRINCIPLE IN DIPLOMACY REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT US REACTIONS HERE AND IN WASHINGTON TO CAIRNS' OUTRAGEOUS STATEMENTS IN HANOI HAVE UNQUESTIONABLY BEEN SALUTARY.

2. PRIMIN SOLICITIOUSLY GREETED ME AT THE DOOR OF HIS RESIDENCE WHERE
CONFIDENTIAL

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WE HAD 80-MINUTE CONVERSATION MARKED BY CORDIAITY, BUT WITH POINTED DISCUSSION OF RECENT PROBLEMS IN OUR RELATIONS. ATMOSPHERE WAS FRIENDLY AND OUTWARDLY RELAXED. NO OTHERS PRESENT. HE ASKEU ME ABOUT MY RECENT VISIT TO DELHI WHICH LED PRIMIN TO EXPAND

ON HIS FAVORITE SUBJECT OF INDIA ABOUT WHICH HE SAID NOTHING WORTH REPORTING. WE ALSO REMINISCED ABOUT OUR MANY MEETINGS OVER THE YEARS SINCE OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER IN 1964.

3. WHITLAM LED INTO SUBSTANCE BY SAYING HE HEARD I WAS DISCONSOLATE OVER MY ASSIGNMENT HERE AND HE REGRETTED THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN MORE FREQUENT OCCASION FOR US TO GET TOGETHER AT HIS HOME, BUT HE HAD BEEN FRIGHTFULLY BUSY DURING HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. I RESPONDED

THAT CANBERRA WAS A DELIGHTFUL PLACE, THE AUSTRALIANS HAD BEEN MOST HOSPITABLE AND I FULLY UNDERSTOOD HIS PREOCCUPATIONS. THAT WAS NOT THE PROBLEM. IF I WAS OUT OF SORTS, IT WAS DUE TO THE DIS-APPOINTMENT ANY DIPLOMAT WOULD EXPERIENCE IF HE FELT THERE HAD BEEN A DRIFT APART IN RELATIONS BETWEEN HIS GOVERNMENT AND THAT OF THE HOST COUNTRY.

4. RATHER THAN GOING OVER ALL THE SPECIFIC ISSUES IN DISPUTE, I THOUGHT IT WAS BETTER TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM IN A POSITIVE SENSE. I SAID WE HAD WELCOMED THE PRIMIN'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON AND PARTICULARLY HIS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. THIS HAD GONE WELL INDEED. DURING HIS VISIT, PRIMIN HAD MADE CONSTRUCTIVE PRESENT-ATIONS ON AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS AT BOTH THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB IN WASHINGTON AND AT THE AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION IN NEW YORK. I RECALLED THAT AT HIS NATIONAL PRESS CLUB SPEECH, THE PRIMIN HAD SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT SEEKS NEW RELATIONSHIPS, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF OLD FIRM ONES... THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT PROPOSE TO INTRODUCE A NEW IMBALANCE BY DISCARDING OR DOWNGRADING OLDER RELATIONSHIPS. THOSE WERE GOOD WORDS, BUT EVEN BETTER WAS HIS STATEMENT THAT THE US AND AUSTRALIA SHOULD EXPLORE CONSTRUCTIVELY THE WIDE AREAS OF AGREEMENT WHICH UNITE US RATHER THAN TO EMPHASIZE THE FEW MATTERS ON WHICH WE ARE DIVIDED OR ON WHICH WE TAKE A DIFFERENT APPROACH TOWARD THE SAME BASIC END. I THEN QUOTED HIS SUBSEQUENT WORDS VERBATIM: "WHEN OUR INTERESTS DO NOT COINCIDE AND WHEN WE DISAGREE WITH THE US, WE SHALL, AS A GOOD FRIEND SHOULD, SAY SO FIRMLY AND FRANKLY, USUALLY AND PREFERABLY IN PRIVATE."

5. WE APPRECIATED, I CONTINUED, THE MANY FAVORABLE COMMENTS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIMIN HAD MADE ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON'S AND DR. KISSINGER'S INITIATIVES TOWARD CHINA, THE SOVIET UNION AND ENDING OUR TROOP INVOLVEMENT IN INDOCHINA. I CONTRASTED THESE STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, WITH WHAT SPECIFICALLY THE PRIMIN HAD SAID DURING THE RECENT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AS WELL AS WITH DR. CAIRN'S MORE RECENT STATEMENTS ABOUT US "AGGRESSION" IN VIETNAM, CITING EXACTLY WHAT HE AND CAIRNS HAD SAID ON EACH OF THOSE ISSUES. I POINTED OUT HOW THEY WERE FACTUALLY INCORRECT, HOW THEY COMPLICATED A NEGOTIATING PROCESS OF GLOBAL CONCERN AND HOW THEY HAD PUZZLED AND CONFUSED OUR FRIENDS IN THIRD COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN EAST ASIA. TO USE HIS OWN WORDS, IF WE DID HAVE DIFFERENCES, SHOULD THESE NOT BE TALKED OUT FRANKLY AND QUIETLY?

6. THE PRIMIN RESPONDED THAT WE SHOULD, BUT THAT IT WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY IN A PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS, ESPECIALLY IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE, TO AVOID INJUDICIOUS REMARKS. WITH SPECIFIC REGARD TO HIS HAVING EQUATED THE US TO THE SOVIET UNION AS SUPERPOWERS EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, HE AGREED THAT THE US HAD ACTED IN A HIGHLY RESPONSIBLE WAY AND HE WAS NOT EQUATING US WITH SOVIET ACTIONS. HE SAID HE WAS MERELY STRESSING THAT BOTH SUPERPOWERS HAD A RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT IN THE CRISIS. HE AGREED WITH ME THAT DR. KISSINGER HAD BEEN SO EVENHANDED THAT HIS ROLE AS MIDDLEMAN WAS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH ISRAEL AND THE ARAB STATES. HOWEVER, THIS HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN TRUE TO US MIDDLE EAST POLICY, WHITLAM CONTINUED. MOREOVER, HE WAS FACED WITH SUCH PRO-ISRAELI EMOTIONS IN AUSTRALIA THAT HE HAD TO MOVE QUICKLY TO UNDERSCORE THE EVENHANDNESS OF AUSTRALIA'S POLICY. HE REGRETTED IF THIS HAD BEEN WORDED IN WAYS THAT IMPLIED US WAS NOT EVENHANDED. HE SAID HE HAD ALREADY APOLOGIZED FOR HIS COMMENT ABOUT PRESIDENT NIXON HAVING ORDERED THE ALERT FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS. HE WAS IN JAPAN AT THE TIME AND WAS NOT ACQUAINTED WITH THE FACTS (I INTERJECTED THAT WE HAD KEPT HIS GOVERNMENT FULLY INFORMED ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE CRISIS). IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS RETURN FROM JAPAN AND CHINA, HE HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH THIS QUESTION OF THE ALERT WAS THROWN AT HIM BY A CORRESPONDENT (SAMUEL) FOR WHOM HE HAD LONG HARBORED A STRONG DISLIKE. WHITLAM SAID HE REGRETTABLY SHOT FROM THE HIP, BUT HAD SUBSEQUENTLY LEARNED THE FACTS AND CORRECTED THE PUBLIC RECORD. HE WISHED TO ASSURE ME OF HIS GENUINE REGRETS OVER THAT INCIDENT. HE SAID HE APPRECIATED MY COMMENT TO THE PRESS IN HOBART THAT I FELT AUSTRALIA SHOULD HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED OF THE ALERT, BUT THAT FAILURE TO DO SO WAS NO BREACH IN OUR CONFIDENTIAL

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ANZUS TREATY, AS SOME NEWSPAPERS HAD CAPTIONED IT.

7. AS FAR AS TRADE MINISTER CAIRNS' REMARKS TO THE PRESS IN NORTH VIETNAM WERE CONCERNED, WHITLAM LABELLED THEM "BLOODY SILLY". ALL HE COULD SAY IN JIM CAIRNS' DEFENSE WAS THAT HE WAS A VERY DECENT MAN, EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED IN THE VIETNAM ISSUE AS "INDEED SO MANY OF US IN LABOR" WERE WHEN IN THE OPPOSITION. WITH CAIRNS, THESE STRONG FEELINGS HAD PERSISTED AND, EVEN THOUGH HE NOW SAW THINGS IN BETTER PROPORTION, IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO TURN AROUND AFTER YEARS OF EXPOSTULATIONS ON VIETNAM, PARTICULARLY WHEN HE FOUND HIMSELF IN NORTH VIETNAM AMID THE WRECKAGE OF THE WAR AND IN THE COMPANY OF HIS NORTH VIETNAMESE HOSTS. HE HAD URGED JIM CAIRNS TO VISIT SOUTH VIETNAM ALSO, WHICH UNFORTUNATELY HE HAD NOT DONE ON THIS OCCASION. WHITLAM HOPED THAT WE WOULD NOT BE TOO DOWN ON CAIRNS, REMEMBERING THAT CAIRNS HAD TAKEN A PROGRESSIVELY MORE FAVORABLE ATTITUDE ON SUCH ISSUES AS FOREIGN INVESTMENTS IN WHICH THE US HAD CONCERN.

8. I ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WAS BETTER DISPOSED TOWARDS CAIRNS THAN SOME MONTHS BACK, BUT WASHINGTON (PLUS MANY AUSTRALIANS) WAS PRETTY OUTRAGED OVER THE LATEST CAIRNS CHARGES ABOUT AMERICAN AGGRESSION. CAIRNS HAD ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD "WON" THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT OUR SIDE

HAD BEEN "DEFEATED". THIS SEEMED TO ME TO BE THE MOST IRRESPONSIBLE OF STATEMENTS. WE HAD ALWAYS EXERCISED GREATEST CAUTION NOT TO CLAIM VICTORIES OR DEFEATS IN NEGOTIATED STEELEMNTS. BESIDES, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE GROSSLY VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO EXTEND THE MASSIVE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO NORTH VIETNAM WE HAD PLANNED. WHITLAM ACCEPTED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT, BUT REFLECTED A VIEWPOINT THAT BOTH SIDES WERE EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLATIONS, THOUGH HE DID NOT SAY SO EXPLICITLY.

9. I BELIEVE IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THE PRIMIN MENTIONED HE HAD GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT ON AUSTRALIA'S CONTINUED CONTRIBUTION TO FEOF IN LAOS AS EVIDENCE OF AUSTRALIA'S DESIRE TO COOPERATE IN INDOCHINA EVEN THOUGH HIS GOVERNMENT TAKES A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEW FROM THE US OF CERTAIN INDOCHINESE ISSUES. (HE WAS REFERRING PRESUMABLY TO CAMBODIA OVER WHICH HE AND I HAVE WRANGLLED SEVERAL TIMES.)

10. I ASKED THE PRIMIN WHETHER IT WOULD BE FAIR TO SAY THAT AMONG BASIC REASONS FOR LESS THAN SATISFACTORY RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO COUNTRIES WERE: (A) THE FACT THAT AUSTRALIA PERCEIVED NO CURRENT OR PROSPECTIVE THREATS, (B) THE NEW AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS REACTING TO PAST OVER-IDENTIFICATION WITH THE US, AND (C) OFF-THE-CUFF GOA LEADERS' REMARKS OF THE TYPE WE DISCUSSED. AS TO (A), I SAID THAT AUSTRALIA'S PRESENT COMFORTABLE SITUATION COULD CHANGE AMID ALL THE PLANETARY DISORDER, AND AUSTRALIA WOULD THEN SEEK TO COUNT

ON THE US. AS TO ;B), SOME AUSTRALIANS SEEMED TO FEEL THAT PLUCKING FEATHERS FROM THE AMERICAN EAGLE SOMEHOW SHOWED AUSTRALIA HAD ACHIEVED ROBUSTNESS AND INDEPENDENCE. WHITLAM SMILINGLY REACTED THAT WE HAD ALL FOUND IT CONVENIENT AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER TO TWIST THE BRITISH LION'S TAIL AND OBSERVED THAT HE WAS NOT SO NAIVE AS TO FEEL THAT THERE WERE NOT LOTS OF THREATS IN THIS WORLD, INCLUDING EAST ASIA, WHICH WOULD HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON AUSTRALIA.

11. WHITLAM FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, TO ACCENT OUR COMMON PURPOSES AND THE FACT THAT OUR BASIC RELATIONS WERE GOOD. HE RECALLED THE MANY THINGS AUSTRALIA HAD DONE WHICH WERE WELCOMED BY AMERICA, SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING AUSTRALIA'S UNILATERAL CURRENCY REVALUATIONS AND TAFIFF REDUCTIONS, ITS ROLE IN UN

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